DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 156 588 SO 010 992

AUTHOR Hornsby, Alton, Jr.
TITLE The Negro in Revolutionary Georgia.
INSTITUTION Georgia Commission for the Bicentennial Celebration, Atlanta.; Georgia State Dept. of Education, Atlanta..
PUB DATE 77
NOTE 23p.; For related documents, see SO 010 986-993

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Black Role; *Blacks; *Colonial History (United States); Instructional Materials; Junior High School Students; Learning Activities; Military Service; Racial Discrimination; *Reading Materials; *Revolutionary War (United States); Secondary Education; *Slavery; State History; Supplementary Textbooks; Teaching Guides; *United States History
IDENTIFIERS *Georgia

ABSTRACT

One of a series of pamphlets about the American Revolution in Georgia, this document explores the role of the black population during the Revolutionary War. Designed for junior and senior high school students, it can be used as supplementary reading or a one-week unit. A teacher's guide is included. Black life in the Revolutionary era, for both slaves and free blacks, was regulated by the same laws and customs prevailing in the pre-war period. Many colonies allowed slaves to join the military efforts of both the patriot and British causes, but Georgia's government refused to arm slaves for combat services and to grant freedom for such service. Black slaves were used in non-combat roles such as defending military storehouses and repairing roads. There are several recorded instances of native free blacks serving for the patriots in Georgia and several hundred blacks from the Caribbean island of Santo Domingo served briefly at Savannah. Although the war ruined plantation life in many areas and reduced the slave population, fundamental tenets of the racial caste system remained largely intact for those blacks who stayed. The teacher's guide contains lists of behavioral objectives, discussion questions, and activities based on the text.
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The Negro In Revolutionary Georgia

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SP 010 992

Editors' Note:

One of the early concerns of the Georgia Commission for the National Bicentennial Celebration was the lack of material on Revolutionary Georgia available for use in the state's public schools during the bicentennial years. As a result, one of the first projects of the Commission was the preparation of a series of pamphlets on the American Revolution in Georgia aimed specifically at public school use. With the cooperation of the Georgia Department of Education, this project has become a reality. Thirteen pamphlets are scheduled to be published between 1974 and 1978.

Our purpose in publishing these pamphlets is to present a clear, concise picture of Georgia's history during these important days. We hope that our efforts will encourage students' interest and add to their knowledge of Georgia's activities during the American Revolution.

Kenneth Coleman
Milton Ready

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The Negro Enters Georgia

In January 1775, a group of Scots meeting at Darien, Georgia, adopted a resolution which, in part, declared that slavery was an "unnatural practice . . . founded in injustice and cruelty, and highly dangerous to our liberty (as well as our lives), debasing part of our fellow creatures below men, and corrupting the virtues and morals of the rest, and is laying the basis of that liberty we contend for . . . upon a very wrong foundation . . ." This declaration, according to Professor Kenneth Coleman of the University of Georgia, was "one of the better early statements of the Georgians in the Revolutionary crisis and put the argument upon a considerably higher plane than heretofore."

During her first 16 years, Georgia had stood alone among the English colonies in North America as a province where only free men could legally live and work; since 1749 the status of Blacks in the colony had not been on a "higher plane." In July 1749, the Trustees for Georgia capitulated to a decade and a half of agitation and permitted the legal introduction of slaves into the colony. The fears of some Georgians themselves that the presence of Blacks would lead to thefts, inconveniences and physical dangers had been cast aside in the name of economic necessity. Influential Georgians, including the merchant James Habersham and the evangelist George Whitefield, had steadfastly affirmed that the colony would not prosper unless slaves were introduced. Whitefield argued further that the transfer of Africans from their native "barbarism" to a Christian colony would be advantageous to all, including the Blacks themselves. Even though the Trustees did not fully accept either of these arguments, by 1749 they could no longer resist the tide of opinion in Georgia which ran so heavily in favor of slavery.

In their capitulation, however, the Trustees again warned of the inherent danger in the use of Black slaves and reminded Georgians of the ease with which their slaves might escape to Florida. (Georgia had been established, in the first place, as a home for the indigent, a military buffer zone against the Spanish in Florida and as a producer of "foreign goods.") The Trustees also suggested certain restrictive regulations for the institution of slavery in the colony. Among these was a requirement that every slaveholder should keep one indentured white male servant aged between 20 and 55 for every four Black slaves above the age of 14. Masters were encouraged to permit "or oblige" their slaves to attend church on Sunday and no work was to be required of the Blacks "on the Lord's Day." "Corporal punishment" was decreed for any interracial sexual cohabitation, and interracial marriages were declared illegal. The Trustees suggested, for the maintenance of public works, that each slave trader and each slaveholder be required to pay an annual tax on each slave. On October 26, 1749, a convention, consisting of 27 prominent Georgians, announced that they were in substantial agreement with the Trustees' restrictions and requested that slavery be allowed at once.

The regulations of slavery adopted by the Trustees in July 1749, with minor modifications, constituted the laws governing the institution in the colony for the next six years. However, when the first Colonial General Assembly met at Savannah on January 7, 1755, immediate attention was given to the question of adopting a new, Georgia-grown slave code.

The "Act for the better ordering and governing Negroes and other Slaves in this Province" covered the treatment, management, trial and punishment, sale and recovery, and the privileges and disabilities of Black slaves in Georgia. According to the act, all offspring of "Negroes, mulattoes and mestizos" who were slaves at the time of the act (1755) were to be assigned to slavery forever.

Georgia slaves could not, without permit, sell fishes, vegetables and produce, or be employed as a carter, fisherman or porter. These prohibitions were apparently designed to keep the Blacks, as

Courtesy, Georgia Department of Archives and History

An Act

To emancipate and set free Austin a Mulatto, also Harry a Negro fellow.

Whereas Austin a Mulatto man at present the property of the Estate of Richard Aycock, esquire, during the late revolution instead of advantaging himself of the times to withdraw himself from the American lines and enter with the majority of his Color and fellow Slaves in the service of his Brittanick majesty and his officers and Vassals, did voluntarily enroll himself in some one of the Corps under the Command of Col. Elijah Clark, and in several actions and engagements behaved against the Common Enemy with a bravery and fortitude which would have honored a freeman, and in one of which engagements he was severely wounded, and rendered incapable of hard servitude; and policy as well as gratitude demand a return for such service and behavior from the Commonwealth.

under the Trustees' regulations, tillers of the soil. Nevertheless a number of slaves did work in domestic and skilled occupations, such as porters, sawyers, carpenters, joiners and coopers. By 1774 Georgia, however, had gone beyond the issuance of permits for non-agricultural slave laborers and required owners to purchase a public badge for such persons.

Negro Life in Georgia During the Revolutionary Era

Throughout the Revolutionary era, the condition of slave life in Georgia and the laws which regulated that life did not change appreciably from what it had been immediately after the enactment of the first codes. The average slave, as elsewhere in the South, was a tiller of the soil (principally, a cultivator of rice) with a circumscribed social life consisting principally of religious activities, occasional recreation and entertainment and the celebration of holidays. In most instances, the free Black population was also included under the terms of the restrictive regulations. Although in Revolutionary Georgia the free Blacks never comprised more than one percent of the total population of the colony, amounting to only 398 persons in the census of 1790, the white community still viewed them as a hostile group, to be controlled not only by legal enactments, but also by social restrictions.

The free Blacks found almost all of their social association within their own group, as they were virtually cut off from the slave community and interacted with the white community only under specified arrangements. Much of this interracial interaction was on the same basis as that of slaves to white persons. Free Blacks were agricultural laborers and servants of one kind or another for whites. Occasionally, however, other enterprises were permitted; for instance, many boatmen and fisherman were Black.

Despite the caste system, in Georgia, as elsewhere, a number of free Blacks managed to achieve notable success. Two of these Blacks, George Liele and Andrew Bryan, both ex-slaves, established, at Savannah, in the 1770's one of the first Black Baptist churches in the American colonies. Liele, a native of Virginia, arrived in Burke County, Georgia, with his master, a Baptist deacon, and was eventually converted and baptized. After his ministerial talents were recognized, Liele was authorized to preach to slaves at plantations along the Savannah River. Later his ministry spread elsewhere, including a few sermons at his master's church. In further recognition of his work, Liele was also granted his freedom by his master. When the former master was killed during the Revolutionary War, some of the master's relatives sought to re-enslave Liele, but a British colonel secured his release. Because of this episode and the strong opposition to a Black church in Savannah, Liele fled with the British from Savannah in 1782. He went to Jamaica where he served two years as an indentured servant. After completing his service, Liele resumed preaching and soon founded the only Baptist church on the island.

Before leaving Savannah Liele baptized Andrew Bryan, his successor, and several other Blacks—some of them slaves and ex-slaves of loyalist masters. Bryan, himself, was a native of Goose Creek, South Carolina. As a boy he was purchased by a Savannah man, for whom he became a coachman and body servant. Although Savannah whites harrassed Bryan, his master defended him against them. Because of his gratitude for this action, Bryan declined to purchase his own freedom until after his master's death. He did, however, purchase the freedom of his wife. In 1783 Bryan was certified as the minister of the Ethiopian Church of Jesus Christ, which by 1800 had reached a membership of 700 persons.

The generally dismal condition of Georgia Blacks in the Revolutionary era was, of course, not indicative of life in the state as a whole. In fact, the decade leading to Lexington and Concord was a period of unparalleled development for the "youngest and weakest" of the British southern colonies. The treaty of Paris of 1763 removed the

Spanish military threat in Florida as well as the Spanish agitation of the Indians. The royal proclamation of 1763 gave the colony for the first time a definite southern boundary at the St. Mary's River. Settlement was expanded south of the Altamaha River. Since 1760, the colony had had, in James Wright, one of the ablest of the royal governors.

In 1773, Georgia was a frontier community of about 33,000 people—18,000 white and 15,000 Black—living mostly along the coast between the Altamaha and the Savannah rivers, the low area between the Ogeechee and Savannah rivers, and up the Savannah River to Augusta. Even though what had once been the "youngest and weakest" of the southern colonies was experiencing its best period of growth, stability and prosperity, it was not unaffected by the events in London, Boston and Philadelphia which would lead to Lexington and Concord.

The nature of the role of Georgia Blacks in the unfolding revolution was also to be affected by developments outside of the state; but in the end Georgians themselves would make the ultimate decisions.

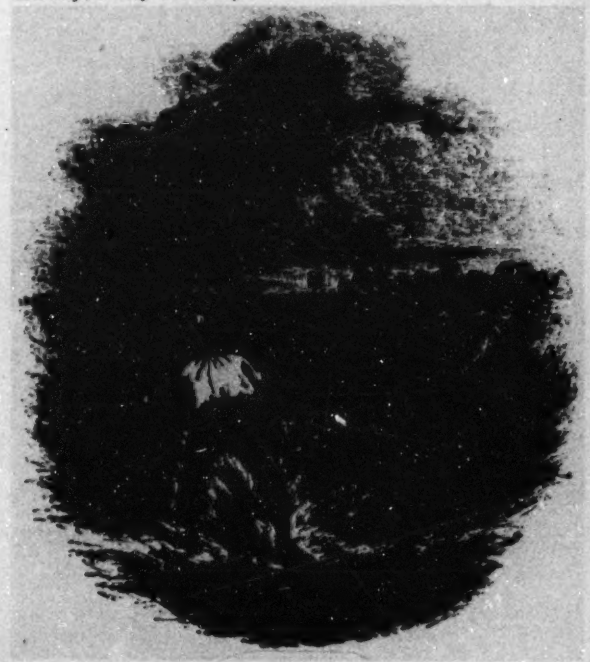
Arming the Slaves

At the outbreak of hostilities, it was general and official policy in most American colonies to exclude Blacks from the colonial militias, but military necessities often made these rules invalid. Thus, by 1775 Blacks were serving in the militias of several colonies. It is well known that several Blacks were numbered among the American "minutemen" at Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775, and that several Blacks fought in the first major engagement of the war at Bunker Hill. Following Bunker Hill, however, the use of Black soldiers in the patriot army gradually fell into disfavor and, by October 23, 1775, all Blacks, free as well as slave, were excluded from service with the American forces. After the British Governor of Virginia, Lord Dunmore, attempted in November 1775 to recruit slaves to serve with his army, General George Washington reversed the American policy and ordered recruiting officers to accept free Negroes in the American Army.

At the time, Georgia steadfastly opposed the use of Black soldiers, slave as well as free, because many Georgians believed that the army would become a refuge for runaway slaves, or that slaves would be taken from their work for long periods. There was also a general fear of a Negro with a gun. Georgia law, in fact, prohibited slaves from carrying firearms for any purpose.

Elsewhere, however, manpower shortages and the worsening military situation on the American side suggested the recruitment of soldiers wherever they could be found. By 1778, several New England states had authorized the use of slaves, and in 1781 New York took the same step. Most

Courtesy, Emory University



Harvesting the Rice

of these states promised the slave his freedom after the war if he served faithfully.

In the South, there was still great reluctance to arm the slaves, despite the manpower shortages and military reverses. Maryland, in the summer of 1780, became the first southern colony to abandon officially opposition to the use of slaves. The legislature ordered that any able-bodied slave between 16 and 40 years old who volunteered could, with the consent of his master, be enlisted. Still Maryland would not go so far as to authorize the establishment of a Black regiment and consciously limited the number of Black enlistments. No other southern colony authorized even the limited use of Black slaves as soldiers.

At the national level, the Continental Congress had, since the early part of 1779, been recommending the employment of slaves as soldiers. After the British occupied Savannah and opened a second campaign to subdue the South, the Continental Congress sent a specific request to Georgia and South Carolina to enlist slaves. In its message of March 29, 1779, the Congress asked the two southern colonies to "take measures immediately for raising three thousand able-bodied negroes." These were to be formed into separate battalions with white officers. Owners of the slaves were to be paid up to 1,000 dollars for each able-bodied man under 35 years of age. The slave was not to receive any salary, but those who served "well and faithfully" to the end of the war were to be freed and given the sum of 40 dollars.

Since the Continental Congress had no coercive authority, it sent South Carolinian John Laurens, an aide-de-camp to General George Washington, to South Carolina and Georgia to argue for the arming of the slaves. Young Laurens, who was slated to become an officer for the Black troops, was the son of Henry Laurens, the president of the Continental Congress and an advocate of the use of Black soldiers. The elder Laurens had predicted as early as March 1778, that the British could be driven out of Georgia if the American armies could enlist 3,000 Blacks.

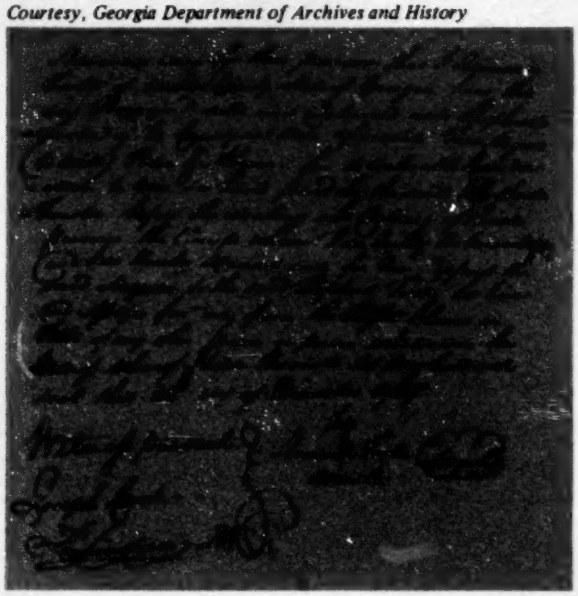
There was a great deal of optimism in the Congress about the success of the Laurens mission. Much of the optimism stemmed from the fact that the resolution "to raise and emancipate" 3,000 Negroes in South Carolina and Georgia "was moved by their own delegates." In addition, on the day the resolution was passed one delegate in the Congress noted that "the last accounts from South Carolina were favorable." Already an Inspector had been appointed "for the Batallions of Negroes to be Raised in South Carolina and Georgia" and Colonel Laurens had been appointed their first officer. Young Laurens, however, failed in his efforts to enlist support for Congress' recommendation in South Carolina. In fact, the proposition was received in many quarters with a sneer; an affront to South Carolina almost as great as the Dunmore Proclamation. General George Washington predicted a similar lack of success in Georgia. Nevertheless, Laurens entered the state and began his campaign for Black enlistments with Governor Richard Howley.

In his first discussion of Congress' recommendation for arming the slaves with the governor, young Laurens felt much encouraged. But, in the end, Georgia was just as adamant on the question as ever and the legislature again rejected the idea of arming the slaves.

Slave Service to the Patriot Cause

Although Georgia never authorized the use of slaves as soldiers, the colony at a very early state in the war used Blacks in non-combat roles. In November 1775, the Georgia Council of Safety ordered that 100 Blacks be impressed to help General Charles Lee enclose the military storehouse at Savannah. In June 1776, the Council consented to the hiring of Blacks to build entrenchments around Sunbury.

Courtesy, Georgia Department of Archives and History



Know all men by these presence that I Kimme Foster of Wilkes County State of Georgia have this day Bargained sold and Delivered unto Shepherd Foster of the County and State aforesaid Two Negroes (to wit) Peter & Abram – for a valuable consideration to me in hand paid by the said Shepherd Foster before the sealing and Delivery of these presence the Receipt whereof I do Hereby Acknowledge and I do hereby Warrent and for ever Defend the said Negroes to the said Shepherd Foster his heirs and Assigns for ever from the Right Claim or Title of any other person or persons whatsoever. In Witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal this 22nd day of December 1787.

Witnesses present

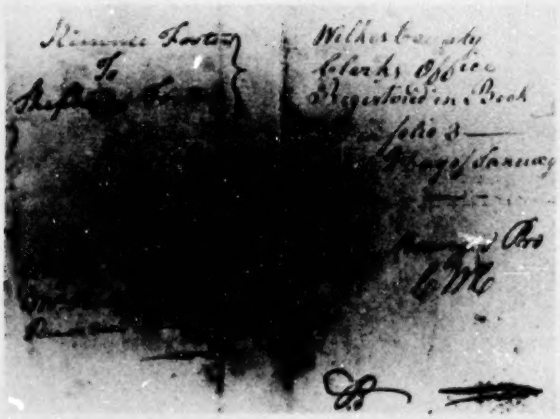
Joseph Cook
John Lindsey

Wilkes County Ga.

Joseph Cook one of the subscribing Witnesses appeared before me & made oath that he saw Kimme Foster sign, seal & deliver this present Instrument of writting as his Act & deed & hand & seal for the uses therein mentioned & that he also saw John Lindsey Esquire sign as a witness with him.

Joseph Cook

Sworn to this 3rd of April 1788
Benj Catching



Bill of sale for the above transaction between Kimme Foster and Shepherd Foster for the sale of two Negroes. Dated January 4, 1788, Wilkes County.

The Georgia Council authorized impressment with great reluctance. It knew that such an act would be viewed unfavorably by slave masters. The masters were particularly concerned about their property loss if an impressed slave escaped, took ill or died. To help soothe the owners' concerns, the council announced that sick or wounded slaves would be taken to a proper hospital and given the necessary "sustenance, medicines, and attendance." If a slave were maimed or killed, his owner would be compensated for the loss. Despite these guarantees, many masters continued to oppose the impressment of their Blacks.

It was because of this resentful attitude toward the idea of impressment on the part of so many masters that the Council of Safety asked for legislation to enforce the practice. According to an act of September 1777, slaves could be called to work on forts, batteries and public works in the state. Masters were required to furnish lists of their male slaves between the ages of 16 and 60, one-tenth of whom could be drafted for up to 21 days, at the rate of three shillings a day. Those slaves who were selected to serve would first have to undergo an appraisal by four property owners and a government commissioner. Once selected, the owner was guaranteed payment for the loss of any slave on account of injury or death. Masters who refused to furnish lists of their slaves were subject to fines. The law was to remain in effect until February 1, 1778. In spite of the law and its penalties some masters employed skillful evasive devices and prevented the drafting of their slaves. Nevertheless, in June 1778, the Executive Council, the enabling legislation having expired, allowed Colonel Andrew Williamson to hire Blacks to repair the roads between the Ogeechee and the Altamaha. The Council told Colonel Williamson that if the owners of slaves refused to hire them out for this purpose, he would be permitted to impress them. Impressed slaves, however, were not to be taken out of their home district, nor were they to be held for more than 10 days.

Captured slaves of British sympathizers (loyalists) were also impressed into non-combat service in Georgia. For instance, in 1776, the Council of Safety ordered that 20 Black axmen taken from the plantation of two British masters be put to work building a battery at Typee. In June 1778, the Executive Council authorized the use of a number of slaves as scouts in a proposed expedition against east Florida. At Savannah in 1780, slaves taken from the enemies were ordered to be put to work or to be sold. The proceeds accruing from those sold were to be divided among the soldiers who participated in the military campaign. Other similar illustrations can be cited.

Black Combatants in Georgia

While most southern colonies emulated Georgia's stand on the use of Black slaves as soldiers, there was not the same die-hard reluctance to employ free Blacks as arms-bearers. Virginia, for example, opened her militia to Blacks as early as July 1775. By 1779, Georgia had also permitted the enlistment of free Blacks (one Black soldier, Nathan Fry, claimed that he enlisted with Colonel Samuel Elbert at Savannah as early as 1775). But because of the very small number of free Blacks – only about 300 – living in the state during the Revolutionary era, this class was destined to be an almost negligible factor as combatants.

The most notable Black arms-bearer for the patriots in Georgia was an artilleryman, Austin Dabney. Dabney, a slave, had been brought to Wilkes County, Georgia from North Carolina by his master, Richard Aycock, shortly after the beginning of the Revolutionary War. Soon thereafter Aycock was called to serve in the Georgia militia. Under rules of substitution, prevalent in several of the colonies, persons who could furnish able-bodied substitutes might be exempted from military service. Aycock used the provision to ask that young Dabney, allegedly the son of a Virginia white woman and a Black father, be permitted to take his place. He swore that the Black boy was,

indeed, a free person of color since the law forbade slaves from bearing arms for any reason.

Young Austin was placed under the command of Elijah Clarke in the Georgia militia and assigned to a company headed by a Captain Dabney. The captain soon gave his own surname to the young soldier.

In February 1779, it is believed that Austin Dabney found himself in the company of more than 250 other Georgians facing a loyalist regiment at Kettle Creek near the town of Washington in Wilkes County. All of the patriots, except young Dabney, were free white men. The Battle of Kettle Creek, a fierce contest between loyalists and patriots, was one of the bloodiest battles fought in the state, ending in a decisive patriot victory. On May 25, 1782, Dabney was wounded in the thigh in an action at Augusta. This wound crippled him for life and ended a brief, but distinguished military adventure.

During his convalescence, Dabney was the guest of the Giles Harris family of Wilkes County. The Black soldier never forgot the kindness which the family showed to him on this occasion. He attached himself to the family as a laborer, friend and, eventually, benefactor; even deeding his son Reuben to the family as a slave.

In 1786 the Georgia Legislature freed Dabney by statute, i.e., he was "entitled to all the liberties, privileges and immunities of a free citizen . . . so far as free negroes and mulattoes are allowed." The legislature was probably concerned that the heirs of Dabney's former master, Aycock might seize him as a slave and reap benefits from the soldier's military fame. Recognizing that Dabney had been disabled through his war services, the legislature also awarded him the same pension received by other wounded and disabled veterans. Although the legislature passed over Dabney because of his race in the land lottery of 1819, two years later it passed a special act granting Dabney a farm of 112 acres of choice land in Walton County (soon to become Newton County). Dabney received the land grant only after having petitioned the legislature "for some aid in his declining years." The legislature noted that Dabney had in fact, "behaved against the common enemy with a bravery and fortitude which would have honored a freeman" and that that body considered him "an object entitled to the attention and gratitude of the state he has defended, and in whose service he has been disabled."

The special act to reward Dabney for his heroism was bitterly opposed by some white Georgians. Others, like Stephen Upson of Oglethorpe who introduced the measure in the legislature, committee chairman Duncan G. Campbell and Governor George Gilmer suported Dabney. Governor Gilmer, for his part, reminded the opponents of the Black soldier's "courageous service" to Georgia and scolded them for acting in such an "unpatriotic" manner.

In later years, Dabney enjoyed some prosperity, became a sportsman and achieved a good deal of popularity among several notable white Georgians. He died in Pike County about 1830. His remains and those of his white friend, Giles Harris, were laid to rest in the same plot, and he was, in the words of the Negro historian Carter G. Woodson "mourned by all."

The only other major military engagement in Georgia involving Black soldiers occurred during the siege of Savannah in the fall of 1779. In this encounter, French troops under the command of Count d' Estaing came to join Americans in an attempt to recapture Savannah, which had been held by the British since December of 1778. D'Estaing's army of 3,600 men included 545 Blacks recruited at Santo Domingo (Haiti). The Haitians were called the "Volunteer Chasseurs." One of these Blacks was a teenaged bootblack and messboy, Henri Christophe. Christophe, who was wounded during the siege, was later to play

an important role in the liberation of Haiti.

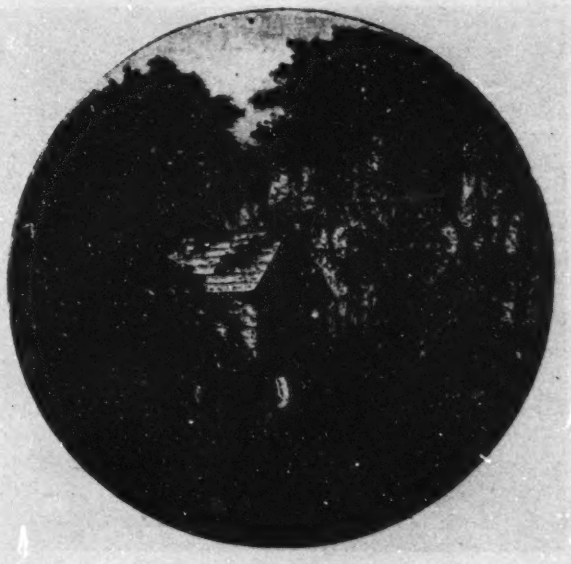
The Franco-American forces began their attack on October 9 and were met by such heavy fire that they had to retreat. As the British advanced their counter-attack, the allies' reserve rear guard, including the Black unit from Santo Domingo, contained the enemy and prevented a complete rout. D'Estaing seized this opportunity to withdraw from American waters. Thus the role of the "Volunteer Chasseurs" in the American Revolution came to an abrupt end.

Georgia Blacks and the British

While Georgia Blacks were involved with the patriot army as both non-combatants and arms-bearers, there were also various uses made of them by the British and their loyalist sympathizers. It will be recalled that a number of British and loyalists masters owned slaves and that many of these were seized by the patriots. On the other hand, the British were not innocent of the practice of slave use or sometimes the outright theft of slaves. These disruptions of the slave labor system were, in the words of Professor Coleman, "one of the greatest damages the war brought to plantations." In 1778 a Savannah planter told of raids of the British who crossed over from east Florida to steal horses and Negroes. The next year an English officer returning to his headquarters at Ebenezer brought in 300 Blacks whom he had taken. When the British came into Georgia, many masters, fearing these types of activities, carried their slaves into South Carolina and subsequently as far as Virginia.

The loyalists also practiced the impressment of slaves. Although the practice was just as unpopular with these masters as with patriot ones, slaves were impressed to work on British defenses at Savannah when the French under Count D'Estaing arrived in 1779, and at Augusta when the patriots threatened its capture in the summer of 1780. According to the 1780 regulations, all masters with male slaves from 16 to 60 had to submit them, along with their tools, for service as needed. Following the passage

Courtesy, Emory University



The Country Church

of the law, Governor Wright collected over 400 slaves and put them to work building fortifications at Savannah.

The British, again like the Americans, employed a number of Blacks as guides or scouts. A Black led the British into Savannah when they captured it in December 1778. Again when the French arrived at Savannah in September 1779, Black guides helped British Colonel John Maitland get his 800 troops into Savannah to make it strong enough to refuse the French demand for surrender. At Dawfusie River, enroute from Beaufort, South Carolina, Maitland had been blocked by French forces. Some Blacks in the area volunteered to lead him around the enemy. The British force used obscure winding waterways, swamps, marshes and a covering of dense fog to reach Savannah undetected. The route had never been used before except by "bears, wolves and runaway Negroes." The French Commander, D'Estaing was later to observe that Maitland caused the failure of the operation.

While the British used very few Blacks as arms-bearers in the South, there was slightly less reluctance to use them on the sea. In April 1779, Captain Hyde Parker, faced with a man power shortage, ordered 12 Blacks enlisted in his Savannah River force. This was probably, according to the distinguished Black historian Benjamin Quarles, the largest number of Blacks ever enrolled in a single British naval unit.

Aside from the participation of Blacks with the British military, a large number of civilian Black Georgians, slave as well as free, (including an unusually large number of young Black women and children) attached themselves to the ranks of the Mother Country. In the period between 1775, when Lord Dunmore issued his proclamation promising freedom to those who joined the British, and 1783, when the Treaty of Peace was signed in Paris, Blacks steadily made their way into the British lines in Georgia and in neighboring South Carolina and east Florida. The British lines in Georgia and British ships in nearby waters held a special attraction for civilian Blacks. Although estimates that up to two thirds of Georgia's slave population was lost during the war are probably exaggerated, it is clear that more than a fifth of the Blacks, of both sexes and all ages, were evacuated from Savannah in 1782. The unsettled conditions during the period gave Blacks a good chance to test the lure of British freedom and thousands left the plantations. Almost 2,000 Blacks were reported in east Florida at the beginning of 1783. At least 1,600 Blacks went from Savannah to Jamaica, the most noted being the pioneer Black preacher, George Liele. The slaves of William Knox, Governor Wright and other large slaveowners were reportedly also taken to Jamaica. One of the best estimates is that something over 3,500 Negroes left Savannah at the evacuation in 1782. Many more Blacks who desired to evacuate were left behind intentionally or had to be left behind due to the haste of the removal, overcrowding or similar circumstances. Interestingly enough, a group of some 300 ex-slaves in Georgia who had done army service for the British during their occupation of Savannah decided to remain in the state despite the danger of their position. These Blacks called themselves the "King of England's soldiers." To avoid a return to slavery, they settled along the swamps bordering the Savannah River, hiding by day and plundering for food and supplies at night (Professor Kenneth Coleman speculates that other autonomous Black communities were established by runaway slaves during the Revolutionary era). Finally, in May 1786 their fortified camp was discovered and burned by militia from Georgia and South Carolina; and the "King of England's soldiers" were dispersed. Three years after the end of the Revolutionary War, the role of Blacks in the struggle between the colonies and England was ended.

Epilogue

In the Revolutionary era the Black population, which three decades earlier was almost non-existent, was called upon to use its hands and backs aiding either the patriot or British cause; although only in the cause of the British was there any great hope of advancing their own status from slavery to freedom. The patriots in Georgia steadfastly resisted arming slaves for combat services and granting freedom for such service. Similarly, there are only two or three recorded instances where Blacks were freed for meritorious non-combat service. In this respect, the Georgians were more conservative than any other colony, refusing to modify their policies on the use of Blacks as soldiers, even during military distress. The Georgians seemed to have favored slavery over victory.

The use of free Blacks—those persons who were not chattels, but whose lives were severely restricted by law and custom—as combatants or non-combatants was almost a moot question in Georgia, as there were only about 300 persons in this class during the Revolutionary era. Nevertheless, there are two or three recorded instances of native free Blacks serving for the patriots in Georgia and several hundred Blacks from the Caribbean Island

of Santo Domingo saw brief service at Savannah. Of all the Black combatants who aided the patriots in Georgia, Austin Dabney won the most meritorious place in the hearts and minds of fellow white Georgians, but his position was, no doubt, enhanced not only by his military achievements, but by his warm, personal relationships with several notable white Georgians.

Black life in the Revolutionary era, for both slaves and free persons, was regulated by the same laws and customs prevailing in the pre-war period. Although Georgia made a greater effort than any other colony to prevent the tumultuous events from disturbing the status quo with regard to her Blacks, she was not entirely successful. Military necessities dictated the use of slaves an non-combatants, and perhaps made the failure to enlist slaves as soldiers less disastrous. The war literally wrecked plantation life in several places and, in many instances, saw the loss of the slave population. On the other hand, the fundamental tenets of the racial caste system remained largely intact for those who remained. At the end of the war, the status quo was fully restored. Georgia delegates at the Constitutional Convention, in arguing against an end to the slave trade, reflected the racial mood of the white majority. Freedom for Black Georgians, even in the Revolutionary era, could come only through exile.

The story of Black participation in the Revolutionary era in Georgia, the youngest of the colonies and the last to embrace Negro slavery in the end, confirms anew that the state's largest minority has always been an actor in all of our experiences, that its actions have advanced the ideals of the nation, but that the race itself has not always been granted the fruits of its labor.

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Teacher's Guide

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Focus

The focus of this guide is to introduce a survey look at the role of the Negro in Revolutionary Georgia. It is suggested that teachers utilize this guide to motivate students to continue in-depth study.

Behavorial Objectives

- Identify and list the contributions of Blacks in Georgia during the Revolutionary period.
- Distinguish between the role of freed Blacks and slaves in relating to the war effort.
- Compare and contrast the war-time service of Blacks as colonial patriots and British sympathizers.
- Identify the social, economic and political rationale for the introduction of slavery in Georgia.
- Describe the government of Georgia prior to, during and immediately following the American Revolution.
- Describe the effects of the American Revolution on Blacks in Georgia.

Suggested Vocabulary

Trustees	caste system	loyalist sympathizers
indentured	Continental Congress	patriots
colonies	emancipate	chattel
states	impressment	land lottery
slave codes	Haiti	

Suggested Schedule

This unit can be extended or modified according to student interest. It is suggested that a one week time frame is necessary for minimal exposure. Additional time is required if activities are used. Students need to have some background in the Revolutionary War period prior to introduction of the unit.

Suggested Discussion Questions

- The restrictions adopted by the Trustees to regulate slavery "were an effort to provide limited protection for slaves." List the restrictions and discuss how each was meant as a protection.
- Compare the role of the slave with the role of the freeman. What were the reasons for the differences?
- Why do you think comparatively few Blacks joined Lord Dunmore's forces?

- Although government policies, for the most part, excluded Blacks from serving in the militia during the Revolutionary period, "military necessities often made these rules invalid." What were those military necessities?

- Why did Georgia law prohibit Blacks from carrying fire arms? Do you think this policy was realistic or unrealistic? Why?

- Discuss the role of the Georgia Council of Safety. Was it successful? Why or why not?

- Compare Austin Dabney with a current Black leader such as Andrew Young. What generalizations can be made concerning

  Similarities between the two men;
  Attributes which make a hero and leader.

- Discuss the various causes for the impressment of slaves. Briefly trace the background of impressment. Why do you think the practice was finally ended?

- Compare and contrast the military role of Blacks on land as opposed to sea.

- What was the function of the "King of England soldiers?" Were they successful in completing their objectives?

- Why was Georgia called the "youngest and weakest of the colonies?"

- If you had been a part of this period in Georgia history which group or military unit would you have chosen to be associated with? Why?

- Summarize the role of Blacks in the Revolutionary War in Georgia.

Activities

These activities are subjectively coded into categories for low reading ability students – (L) average, (A) gifted or advanced and (G) students. The arbitrary coding is in no way meant to limit the student.

A, G Research the background of each of the Trustees. What clues can you find that might explain

their opposition to slavery in Georgia?
their decision to acquiesce and introduce slavery within the state?

A, G Have students make a chart comparing the Trustees' "restrictive regulations for the institution of slavery in Georgia" with the Southern Slave Code.

A, G Construct a population distribution chart comparing the number of Blacks in Georgia (a) prior to 1776, (b) 1900 and (c) 1977. List the reasons accounting for the change.

L, A, G Make a collage comparing the life of the Negro in Revolutionary Georgia and today.

L, A, G Have a student cook any food item which was introduced in the colonies during the Revolutionary period. (One of the best resources for this is the *Charleston Cookbook.*)

G Research the influence of the Black church during the 1700's. How did it affect the war effort?

L, A, G Have students research the lives of George Liele, Andrew Bryan, Austin Dabney and Nathan Fry. Present a biography to the class in any form chosen by the students, i.e. play, reading skit, etc.

L, A, G Draw pictures of the above named individuals.

L, A, G Make doll costumes of clothing worn during the Revolutionary War period.

L, A, G Let students role-play a conversation between Austin Dabney and Kunte Kinte on a given topic such as – the role of the slave in fighting the American Revolution.

G Through research find why James Wright was "one of the ablest of the Royal Governors."

G Compare the centers of population in Georgia in 1773 with the centers of population today. Describe and explain the similarities and differences. Discuss the factors accounting for the changes in population distribution.

A, G Using reference material, other than the unit, find the causes of the patriot army looking with disfavor on Blacks serving in the armed forces.

G Through extensive research, including the state archives, compute the number of Blacks in Georgia who were freed as a result of military service after the American Revolution. If possible, compare this with the national average during the same time period.

A, G Pretend you are a journalist. Write the headlines and article describing:

a. The meeting of the Scots at Darien, Georgia, in January 1775
b. The message sent by the Continental Congress to Georgia and Florida March 29, 1779
c. The Battle of Kettle Creek
d. The dispersion of the "King of England Soldiers"
e. The grant of freedom to Austin Dabney

Have other students report the same events as might have been told by one slave to another. Discuss the reasons for the different interpretations.

L, A, G Write a one day diary in the life of a teenager during the Revolutionary period. Compare it to a one day diary in the life of a teenager today.

G Research the life of John Laurens and his role in the Revolution. Why did he become involved

and why do you think South Carolina and Georgia refused to accept the resolution?

L, A, G Beginning with Cripus Attucks, trace through pictures, short stories, art reproductions or oral presentation the role of Blacks during the American Revolution.

L, A, G Obtain any information available on the topic of Giles Harris. Have students role-play the friendship between Harris and Austin Dabney.

G Contact the Department of Archives and order a search of the statute issued by the legislature freeing Austin Dabney.

G Research the "Volunteer Chasseurs" with particular emphasis on the life of Henri Cristophe and his subsequent rise to power.

L, A, G Compare the music of the Revolutionary War period with the music of today. How are the basic themes different? How are they similar?

L, A, G Organize debate teams and have students choose a group of individuals with whom they would have identified with during this period. Choices must be defended with facts as well as feelings.

or

Given: There would have been a difference in the outcome of the war if Blacks had not played a role.
A variety of other debate topics could be suggested.

L, A, G Write a play or fictional story depicting any person or event during the 1760's and 1770's. Present to the class.

L, A, G Through the use of any presentation form chosen by the students, describe the differences and similarities in our lives today if THE BRITISH HAD WON THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

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R	R	B	G	I	L	E	S	T	T	X	M
X	I	E	T	B	M	I	U	P	R	K	T
M	A	V	D	P	A	R	I	S	U	I	I
D	I	A	E	H	N	B	S	B	S	X	P
A	U	R	R	R	T	T	K	J	T	E	B
B	H	N	U	H	O	I	K	K	E	T	S
N	X	H	M	I	C	E	E	D	E	X	Y
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Y	F	T	S	J	R	M	U	X	E	H	B
Q	A	F	G	C	M	E	Z	F	K	P	L
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G	E	O	R	G	E	L	I	E	L	E	Q
I	G	B	G	K	H	G	A	C	D	R	T
B	X	F	I	X	T	W	P	N	R	T	G
L	O	Y	A	L	I	S	T	M	K	A	I
L	X	B	S	Q	M	I	S	D	T	J	X

1. The group of men who governed Georgia when it was a colony.
2. The ex-slave who left Savannah and founded the first Baptist Church in Jamaica.
3. The "youngest and weakest" of the colonies prior to the American Revolution.
4. The proclamation aimed at obtaining slaves to fight for the British.
5. The Georgia Council of _____.
6. The most notable black arms-bearer for the patriots in Georgia.
7. The Battle of Kettle _____.
8. Austin Dabney's friend.
9. The men and women who sympathized with the British.
10. The men and women who sided with the colonies.
11. The treaty which ended the American Revolution in 1783.
12. The Altamaha _____.

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